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THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO | MASTERS PROGRAM IN COMPUTER SCIENCE

Student Handbook | 2024 - 25 Academic Year

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Academic Honesty & Plagiarism

The MPCS has high standards for academic honesty. The MPCS Academic Honesty & Plagiarism Policy is aligned with the University of Chicago's Academic Honesty & Plagiarism policy:

"It is contrary to justice, academic integrity, and to the spirit of intellectual inquiry to submit another's statements or ideas as one's own work. To do so is plagiarism or cheating, offenses punishable under the University's disciplinary system. Because these offenses undercut the distinctive moral and intellectual character of the University, we take them very seriously.

Proper acknowledgment of another's ideas, whether by direct quotation or paraphrase, is expected. In particular, if any written or electronic source is consulted and material is used from that source, directly or indirectly, the source should be identified by author, title, and page number, or by website and date accessed. Any doubts about what constitutes "use" should be addressed to the instructor."

Cheating, copying, and all forms of plagiarism and academic dishonesty are considered a serious offense in the MPCS. The MPCS Academic Honesty & Plagiarism policy adds the following requirements to the University's guidelines above for all students taking MPCS

classes:

- Academically honest work is understood to be:
    - Work that has been done exclusively by you, without any outside assistance.
    - Work that has involved some outside assistance (such as other students and reference materials found in the library or the Internet), but which includes proper attribution.
- Students must follow these rules for all submitted work:
    - Always list any external sources consulted in your work: This includes not only books or websites you consulted, but also students that you discussed your solution with.
    - Never use another student's work: Never submit any work that has been written by another student. This is unacceptable even with attribution. You can discuss the high level aspects of an assignment with other students, but the work you hand in must always be your own. Some MPCS instructors may use plagiarism detection software to grade submitted work.
    - Never share your work with others or post it on a publicly accessible website: You should never share your solution to an assignment with other students - this is considered a serious offense. If the student you shared your solution with submits that work as their own, you will be penalized too, even if you did not know that the student intended to copy your work.
    - You should also never upload your code to public GitHub repositories, code snippet sharing sites like pastebin, etc. If someone copies your code from such a site, you will be penalized, even if you did not intend for your code to be used in that way.
    - You should never share work from previous quarters with students in MPCS classes. Even if you are not in the class that quarter, but your work is found to have been copied and submitted, you will be penalized for a violation of academic honesty.

If you are ever unclear on whether you are following the rules correctly, please ask your instructor before an assignment is due. It is your responsibility to seek clarification.

The program's administration is notified of any violations of this policy. This misconduct will be investigated promptly and referred to a disciplinary committee. Penalties may include a zero for an assignment, an automatic F grade for the course, being placed on academic probation in the MPCS, suspension from the MPCS program or expulsion from the University of Chicago.

Academic Probation

If a student in the MPCS is not making satisfactory progress towards his/her degree, the student may be placed on Academic Probation.

In particular, any of the following may place a student on Academic Probation:

- Earning a single grade of C or below
- Academic Honesty violations
- Two or more Withdrawals (W), incomplete grades (I) or blank grades.

The standard requirement is that the student on probation should earn an average GPA of a B+ or better in the next quarter they are enrolled in the MPCS, with no single grade below a C+. This grade requirement will be in place until the student has completed three (3) classes while on academic probation, including both immersion classes and is making satisfactory academic progress towards graduation. Students who fail to improve their academic performance during the probation period may be withdrawn from the program.

A student receiving two F grades in a single quarter may be withdrawn from the program for failure to maintain satisfactory academic progress.

Students are expected to make continuous satisfactory academic progress in the program. Students who encounter unexpected difficulties during their studies should refer to the Leave of Absence policy.

Computer Accounts

Use of the University of Chicago's computer resources must conform to UChicago's IT Policies.

All information about CS technology resources can be found on the CS Techstaff site.

Contacts for MPCS Students

For general questions, please feel free to reach out to admin-mpcs@lists.uchicago.edu. This email address reaches all members of the MPCS admin team.

Please make sure to include the following in all communications:
First and Last Name (Official name in University systems, not Preferred name)
Student ID Number
CNet ID

The following additional channels of communication exist within the Computer Science department and the Division of Physical Sciences. Please use them in the order presented.

MPCS Leadership and Staff: admin-mpcs@lists.uchicago.edu
Associate Director, Student Affairs: Karin Czaplewski
Executive Director: Molly Stoner
MPCS Director: Borja Sotomayor
PSD Dean of Students: Bahareh Lampert

Course Audit

The Masters Program in Computer Science does not permit course auditing. This policy is applicable to MPCS students, students from other UChicago programs, UChicago employees, and individuals unaffiliated with the University. Anyone attending MPCS classes must be officially registered.

MPCS Alumni Audit Requests
Non-MPCS Student Course Requests

Classroom Conduct

Students are expected to respect each other, the professor and learning environment during class. Access to a laptop computer, tablet or the Internet during class can be a valuable aid to classroom learning. We encourage students to use laptop computers for note-taking, exercises and other uses authorized by the Instructor that pertain directly to course discussions and lecture topics. Students are discouraged from using laptop computers in ways that distract themselves and others from the learning process (e.g., surfing non-course materials, Facebook, emailing). All cell phones must be turned off during class.

Students found in violation of the Classroom Conduct policy are subject to discipline at the Instructor's discretion, including but not limited to removal from the class.

Course Completion

We recognize that our students may have to deal with emergency situations that interfere with their studies. In a case of emergency, where classes cannot be completed in the quarter taken, a student can request a leave of absence from the program. Please review the Leave of Absence policy below.

For students with scheduling conflicts, job duties, workload, recruiting, or other factors that have affected a student's ability to keep up in a particular course, a student should withdraw from the course. Poor performance in the class, or not being on track to earn a passing grade, is not a reason for a leave of absence. Please review the Withdrawal policy below.

Course Grades

You must earn a grade of C+ or better in each of the courses that apply toward your degree requirement. All grades received are final. Grades can only be changed by the registrar due to an administrative error. It is the students' responsibility to check their records at the end of each quarter and report all grading errors to admin-mpcs@lists.uchicago.edu immediately.

In the MPCS, we consider grading to be the exclusive purview of the instructor. If concerns remain after reaching out to the course instructor, students may follow the PSD Student Concerns and Grievance policy. If a grade below C+ is earned for a class, that class will not count towards graduation requirements. In most cases, failed courses cannot be retaken and students should choose a different class to fulfill the graduation requirements. However, if the failed class is required for graduation (i.e., Algorithms), the student will need to register and pay for the course in order to take it again. Tuition and fees will be assessed as scheduled.

For MPCS 50101 Concepts of Programming and MPCS 50103 Math for Computer Science: Discrete Math:

- These are prerequisite classes for the MPCS. The material covered in these classes is necessary for success in the program. A grade of C+ or better is required to successfully pass the course and move on to core classes in the MPCS program.
- If you do not successfully complete MPCS 50101 Concepts of Programming with a C+ or better we will set a time for you to meet with an academic counselor. In most cases we will recommend withdrawal from the MPCS. In our experience, students that struggle in the immersion programming struggle throughout the program.

- If you take MPCS 50101 Concepts of Programming, you are eligible to take MPCS 51036 Java or MPCS 51042 Python as your Core Programming course.
- If you do not successfully complete MPCS 50103 Math for Computer Science: Discrete Math with a C+ or better we will set a time for you to meet with an academic counselor to determine the best way to move forward. This may include academic probation or withdrawal from the MPCS.
- The MPCS administration reserves the right to reevaluate a student's status in the program if grade requirements are not met.

Course Limits

Part time students may register for one or two courses per quarter. Full time students may register for three courses per quarter. Registration in additional courses above this limit requires MPCS administration approval.

Courses Outside the MPCS

MPCS students may request to take classes outside of the program to fulfill graduation requirements. The full policy, including a link to the request form, can be found on the Course Registration page.

Course Progression

All students are encouraged to meet with an academic counselor before the start of studies.

The curriculum of the MPCS is designed to provide core CS fundamentals at the start of studies. For this reason, we require all entering students to take three core courses before moving on to elective classes.

We do understand that some students are entering the program with a substantial CS background and may have already covered this material. For this reason, we welcome you to make an appointment and talk with us about course planning. We can discuss your background and other core courses that you can take at the start of your studies.

Independent Study

Students who would like to work on a research project with a faculty member during their time in the program should consider applying to the Practicum Program. If a student and a faculty member would like to do a research project outside of the Practicum Program, an independent study can be created. An independent study will be counted as elective credit towards the student's Masters degree and tuition will be assessed.

Independent studies must be approved by the program's administration. The approval process can take as long as 3 weeks. Independent studies cannot be accepted as substitutes for regularly scheduled courses. Independent studies should offer a student the opportunity for a more advanced coverage of a particular topic. You should not assume that a given faculty member would necessarily be interested in the study you propose, or that she would have the time to work with you. Students interested in independent studies should discuss their plans with the prospective faculty supervisor in order to prepare an action plan, prior to submitting a petition.

A petition for an independent study must include the following:

- A descriptive title (up to 50 characters long)
- A statement of scope and objectives (up to 500 words long)
- The name of the faculty advisor/supervisor
- An outline of the study, showing that the student will invest at least 60 hours in studying and working on the project
- A set of 3-5 milestone objectives that will demonstrate the student's progress

Petitions should be submitted by email to the program's administration at least three weeks prior to the beginning of the quarter during which you wish to pursue an independent study.

Petitions will not be approved for topics that are available through regularly scheduled courses in the MPCS.

Independent studies must be completed in one quarter. A limit of two practicums and/or independent studies will be approved for a student while in the program.

Leave of Absence

The MPCS follows the Leave of Absence policy set by the PSD Dean of Students office.

MPCS students who wish to take a leave of absence from the program are required to notify the program administration as soon as possible. A student may be approved for a personal leave of absence of up to four academic quarters. A student may be approved for a medical leave of absence of up to four academic quarters. Students requesting a medical leave of absence must provide documentation. Tuition penalties and fees are assessed as scheduled.

International students on a student visa should also review the Office of International Affairs (OIA), Leave of Absence policy.

Pass/Fail

The pass/fail grade option is not available to Masters Program in Computer Science students.

Transfer Credits

All MPCS students are required to register and successfully complete the total number of required courses for the 9-Course Program, 12-Course Program, Joint MBA/MPCS Program and the Pre-Doctoral Program while they are in MPCS student status. No previous coursework prior to entering the program will be counted towards your degree. The MPCS does not allow the transfer of credits from any other graduate program, including credits from other graduate programs at the University of Chicago.

MPCS courses taken before you are in MPCS student status will not count towards your MPCS degree requirements. This includes any courses approved per the non-MPCS course request guidelines. While you would not be required to repeat any passed courses, you would still be required to complete the required number of courses in order to graduate.

Time to Degree Completion

The maximum period between a student's first enrollment in the MPCS and the student's graduation cannot exceed 22 academic quarters.

Student Concerns and Grievance

The MPCS follows the PSD Student Concerns and Grievance policy as outlined on the PSD website.

The following channels of communication exist within the MPCS and the Division of Physical Sciences.

MPCS Leadership and Staff: admin-mpcs@lists.uchicago.edu
Associate Director, Student Affairs: Karin Czaplewski
Executive Director: Molly Stoner
MPCS Director: Borja Sotomayor
PSD Dean of Students: Bahareh Lampert

Withdrawal from a Class

Students may withdraw from a class at any time up until final exam has been given or final project due, whichever occurs first.

For students on Academic Probation, a course withdrawal is considered a grade lower than a C+ and will be assigned a weight of zero for GPA calculation.

Tuition Refund Schedule:

- Up to the end of the third week: 100% tuition refund. Class will be removed from transcript.
- Week four and later: Must follow Withdrawal policy.
    - No tuition refund.
    - The dropped class will remain on your official transcript with a letter grade of W.
    - Charged a late change of registration fee.

No exceptions will be made to this refund schedule.

Please note that any student with two Withdrawals (W) on their transcript will be put on Academic Probation for failing to make academic progress in the Masters Program in Computer Science.